

Annex E:
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

MISSION

- A. To maintain, through all available communications media, a coordinated, accurate, consistent, and continuous flow of information and instructions before, during, and after the hurricane to provide the public and elected officials with full knowledge of:
 - 1. The existing situation in the threatened area of the hurricane.
 - 2. The actions being taken by governmental authorities.
 - 3. The actions to be taken by the populace to reduce risks to life and property and to expedite recovery.
 - 4. To provide information regarding return to homes on the part of the populace once the threat has lessened following evacuation.
 - 5. Disseminate information concerning donated goods (i.e., delivery, packaging, etc.) and volunteer needs.
- B. Public information is subject to rapid change during the threat of a hurricane and actual occurrence of the hurricane; therefore, all news media personnel and other resources for disseminating public information must be kept informed for maximum utilization.
- C. The public might accept as valid rumors, hearsay, and half-truth information that can cause panic, fear, and confusion. Constant monitoring of the media, including the Internet, and quickly correcting inaccurate information is vital.
- D. In the event of an announced evacuation because of the impending threat of a hurricane, it is imperative that the public understands the threat and follows the advice of state and local government when an evacuation order is given. Areas to be evacuated include only storm surge inundation areas and residents of mobile homes who may be at risk by exposure to hurricane force winds.

ORGANIZATION

- A. When a hurricane threatens the state, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management Public Affairs Office sets up an office in the State EOC, 7700 Midlothian Turnpike, telephone (804) 674-2400.

- B. Designated staff personnel other than PAO staff members of VDEM will be added to supplement the External Affair efforts.
- C. Designated state agencies (as permitted by the Virginia Emergency Services and Disaster Laws of 2000, as amended, Section 44-146.24, cooperation of public agencies) will furnish professionally-qualified personnel to supplement the External Affairs office.
- D. The Virginia Department of Emergency Management will:
 - 1. Receive, compile, and prepare authoritative information on all phases of the hurricane for release to the media.
 - 2. Coordinate the release of hurricane-related information with other agencies of state and the federal government, local governments, and quasi-public relief organizations.
 - 3. Keep the Governor's press secretary informed concerning the existing hurricane situation.
 - 4. Maintain current lists of radio stations, television stations, cable television companies, and newspapers to be utilized for public information news releases.
 - 5. Maintain current contact lists of Congressional and state elected officials.
 - 6. Maintain a briefing room for media representatives in the space provided in the vicinity of the State EOC and at the best location in the area of the hurricane.
 - 7. Prepare news releases for transmission to the media and for handout to media representatives who visit the State EOC or briefing site in the area of the hurricane, or for those media representatives who telephone requesting hurricane-related information.
 - 8. Prepare information for transmission to elected officials. Escort and provide briefings for elected officials who visit the State EOC.
 - 9. Establish and maintain a public inquiry telephone number for the general public who call in order to dispel or clarify rumors.

10. Update the Virginia Department of Emergency Management Website at www.vaemergency.com with the latest information on the hurricane, the response and the recovery.

E. State Agencies

State agencies possessing the capability are to be prepared, on request, to furnish qualified professional personnel to augment the Virginia Department of Emergency Management External Affairs section, per the Virginia Emergency Services and Disaster Laws of 2000, as amended. The Public Affairs Office maintains a list of qualified personnel. State agencies must coordinate their hurricane related news releases and other information pieces with the Joint Information Center.

F. Local Governments

1. Prepare pre-scripted news releases for the broadcast news media, which clearly describe the areas to be evacuated. This should be completed for each contingency or storm scenario.
2. Assist State Coordinator and Regional Coordinators of Emergency Management, or their information officers in the dissemination of public information.
3. Establish procedures for the flow of information to the public regarding the hurricane situation, including providing input to the affected Emergency Alerting System (EAS) radio and/or television station.
4. Maintain lists of radio and television stations, cable stations, and newspapers within the affected jurisdiction including names and telephone numbers of key personnel.
5. Publicize the telephone number of an information officer where official hurricane information and answers to public inquiries can be delivered.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

Information officers at the state, federal and local government levels will take actions, as appropriate, during each phase of the hurricane as outlined below.

A. External Affairs Concepts

1. Localities will prepare and, through the local news media, disseminate the public news releases ordering or recommending evacuation. These news releases should be coordinated in advance with the State EOC.
2. The Public Information Officer (PIO) for the state is responsible for public information news releases relative to state actions during the hurricane threat including information regarding possible evacuations and expected landfall.
3. The state PAO trains other state PAOs as well as other state agency personnel designated as PIOs in the operation of a public information office hurricane disaster team. The State VDEM PAO will conduct annual training sessions for those PIOs designated as PIO assistants in a hurricane emergency.
4. The state PIO makes the announcement to the media, in conjunction with the federal PIO of the opening of the Joint Field Office (JFO) in the affected area once the President has declared the area an official disaster area as a result of damages sustained from the hurricane.
5. Disaster applicants should initiate their request for disaster assistance by use of Teleregistration provided by FEMA. Applicants may acquire additional assistance through the Disaster Recovery Center (DRC). DRC procedures apply to reception, registration and application form/s assistance, as well as an exit interview. To the extent possible, early notification of DRC locations will be prepared and announced through the mutual efforts of the federal and state PAO, with the help of local PIOs. The mutual aid concept is mandatory in all disasters that may befall the Commonwealth.

B. Normal Operations

Carry out a program of public information designed to:

1. Build confidence and goodwill in hurricane preparedness.
2. Educate citizens to warning signals and the importance of hurricane preparedness actions. Identify the difference between a Hurricane Watch and a Hurricane Warning.
3. Increase understanding of individual responsibilities, actions, and duties when hurricane plans are placed in operation.
4. Coordinate emergency public information plans with other emergency programs.

5. Orient Emergency Management staff members, other state agencies and news media personnel on emergency public information policies, plans, and procedures. Conduct briefings for media representatives regarding their role before, during, and after a hurricane.

6. Activate regional or local information centers, as applicable. Open Joint Information Center (JIC) for hurricane emergencies.

7. Conduct an annual hurricane public awareness campaign enlisting the aid of local weather forecasters, as well as the local press to print hurricane evacuation routes and radio and television public service awareness announcements.

C. Increased Readiness

1. Meet with, or send releases to, news media to review emergency public information plans and procedures. Help the media better understand the state hurricane plan and evacuation process, including designated routes.

2. Check radio and television stations to ensure that they can relay or transmit information to the public in the affected area of the hurricane.

3. Releases should prepare the people to:

a. Understand the conditions a hurricane may impose upon them.

b. Understand that plans exist for emergency relief for the state and its political subdivisions especially noting the affected area of the emergency.

c. Understand:

(1) Individual responsibilities, actions, and duties when the plans are placed in operation.

(2) How they will receive emergency instructions.

4. Issue news releases announcing preliminary steps for increasing hurricane preparedness readiness.

5. Meet with, or send information to, elected officials to help them better understand the state hurricane plan and evacuation process, including designated route.
6. Post updated information to www.vaemergency.com and coordinate with the Governor's Web master.

D. Response

1. Relay instructions on measures, which will save lives and minimize property damage.
2. Maintain through all available media, a flow of official news and information to keep the public informed of the hurricane situation.
3. Maintain communication with elected officials to ensure they are kept information of the hurricane situation.

E. Recovery

1. Provide knowledge of:
 - a. The existing situation in the disaster area.
 - b. The actions being taken by governmental authorities, and applicable private concerns, to include decisions, recommendations, and instructions.
2. Supervise the dissemination of all survival information and instructions.
3. Include the possibility of unscrupulous contractors who may prey on unsuspecting victims of the hurricane.
4. Designate priorities for news releases.
5. Publish lists of the injured, their location, and the names of known dead as certified by the Virginia Department of Health making certain that every effort has been made to notify next of kin prior to making public their names.
6. Inform the citizens as to where they should go for various types of hurricane relief assistance.

7. Inform citizens in the affected area, as directed, of expected charitable donations and where and when to receive them.
8. Keep elected officials abreast of local, state and federal actions.
9. Inform citizens how to properly volunteer their assistance or donate money, goods or services.

MAJOR DISASTER DECLARED BY THE PRESIDENT

In a Presidentially-declared major disaster, public information concerning federal disaster assistance and the location and operation of the Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC) is the responsibility of the Public Information Officer (PIO) on the Federal Coordinating Officer's (FCO's) staff. The State VDEM PIO and local government Public Information Officers will assist the federal PIO, to the maximum extent possible, in the dissemination of disaster assistance information.

Photographic Coverage

- A. Early photographic coverage by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the news media as soon as a disaster occurs will assist in supporting the Governor's request for a major disaster declaration by the President should the decision be made to seek federal disaster assistance. Further, in addition to its historical value, such coverage in the national media will provide an indication of the magnitude of the disaster and could prompt an early disaster response by federal and state agencies. The VDEM PIO will make the necessary arrangements for appropriate photographic coverage in the disaster area.
- B. When warnings or the actual progression of events of weather phenomena indicate that a disaster of such seriousness as to cause loss of life or major damage to property is likely to, or has occurred, in any part of the Commonwealth, a photographic team will be assembled to proceed immediately to the disaster area.
- C. The photographic team will be under the overall coordination of the VDEM Public Affairs Office and will be composed of media representatives from the affected areas and, if available, members of the major wire services, as well as the staff photographic team.
- D. State-controlled aircraft from the Department of Aviation will be requested to provide air transportation for the team to the disaster area. If air transportation is not available, state-owned and private automobiles will be used by the team members. The Civil Air Patrol (CAP) will also be used for back-up air transportation when Department of Aviation assets have been exhausted.

SUPPORT

Support agreements - and liaison arrangements with other VDEM staff designated as External Affairs help, state agencies, quasi-government and private cooperating agencies, and the news media will be the responsibility of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management Public Information Officer.

PUBLIC INFORMATION CONCEPT

A. General

Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs) will be opened as soon as reasonably possible after the entire response team, including Public Information and Outreach, has conducted an intense and effective public education program, which will provide an accurate description of the recovery process. The purposes of the education program are two-fold:

1. Assist those affected in making a more informed decision as to whether they really need to visit a DRC.
2. Enable those visiting a DRC to better understand the application process prior to their visit.

PROCEDURES

A. Pre-Declaration

DHS\FEMA and state PIOs will coordinate their efforts prior to a presidential disaster declaration to minimize confusion and misinformation from the moment the media becomes involved in a potential declaration.

Fact sheets and briefings will be given to elected officials before a declaration to ensure that they fully understand the process.

B. Post-Declaration

1. A state PIO should travel to the disaster area as soon as possible after the federal declaration to promote the recovery process, including the many ways for people to register for federal assistance. This might happen before a JFO is established.

2. A public outreach effort must take place before the first DRC is scheduled to open. It takes time to ensure proper media coverage.
3. The External Affairs Office will ensure that elected officials are aware of planned DRC openings before they take place. Also, they will ensure that elected officials understand the federal assistance process.
4. The PIO in the disaster area needs to provide in-depth and realistic explanations of assistance programs available to include:
 - a. Advising applicants to contact their insurance agent and file necessary claims immediately.
 - b. Advising applicants that they can register through other means than visiting a DRC. The PIO should stress phone and Internet applications.
 - c. Informing applicants that when visiting the DRC they will be required to provide basic information, such as address, telephone number, estimated extent of damage, proof of residence, name of insurance agent, and type of coverage.
 - d. Encourage applicants to make a written inventory of their damages and losses for future use.
 - e. A visit to the DRC is the initial step in the recovery process. The visit is essentially to obtain information and fill out applications. A delay in processing on the first day can be expected; therefore, a visit on the second or third day might be preferred.
 - f. Disaster aid does not assure total recovery from disaster losses, nor is assistance provided immediately.

ACTION CHECKLIST – EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION

The following operations periods will be used in state and local hurricane plans. The need for coordination precludes the use of different time periods or terminology.

Condition 5: Routine Operations

1. Develop SOPs
2. Establish working relationship with media outlets and local jurisdictions.
3. Prepare and publish general hurricane and protective action information.
4. Prepare pre-scripted news releases as appropriate for different storm categories.
5. Prepare PSAs on hurricane preparedness.
6. Establish working relationship with elected official staff.

Condition 4: Forecasted Arrival of Tropical Storm Force Winds within 120 Hours (D-5 to D-3 Days)

1. Respond to news media queries as needed.
2. Review/revise pre-scripted news releases as appropriate.
3. Notify staff and other state agencies of releases being distributed.
4. Inform elected officials of ongoing and planned activity.
5. Update media and elected official contact lists.

Condition 3: Forecasted Arrival of Tropical Storm Force Winds Within 72 Hours (D-3 Days)

1. Contact DHS/FEMA Region III – coordinate hurricane preparedness information with other states as needed.
2. Begin issuing broadcast PSAs to media and posting on web page.
3. Review/revise/distribute pre-scripted news releases as appropriate.

4. Distribute necessary information to elected officials.

Condition 2: Forecasted Arrival of Tropical Storm Force Winds Within 48 Hours (D-2 Days)

1. Verify/establish JIC location.
2. Check out/verify JIC equipment (phones, computers, fax machines, supplies, etc.)
3. Verify/establish VPIC location
4. Check out/verify VPIC equipment
5. Distribute/issue media advisory regarding ground rules for Emergency Public Information and briefing schedule that might be established.
6. Review/revise/distribute pre-scripted news releases as appropriate.
7. Contact DHS/FEMA Region III – coordinate hurricane preparedness information with other states as needed.
8. Issue broadcast PSAs to media and posting on web page.
9. Distribute information to elected officials as appropriate.

Condition 1: Forecasted Arrival of Tropical Storm Force Winds Within 24 Hours (D-1 Day)

1. JIC is activated and fully staffed.
2. VPIC is activated and fully staffed if directed.
3. Request PDA teams to keep cost and damages figures by county/jurisdiction.
4. Keep DHS/FEMA ERT PIO apprized of storm's potential.
5. Prepare aircraft and video capability to fly storm path and/or coast as soon as possible as safe flying conditions return.
6. Review/revise/distribute pre-scripted news releases as appropriate.

7. Contact DHS/FEMA Region III – coordinate hurricane preparedness information with other states as needed.
8. Issue broadcast PSAs to media and posting on web site.
9. Distribute information to elected officials as appropriate.

Landfall (Arrival of Tropical Storm Force Winds - Departure of Tropical Storm Force Winds)

1. Coordinate DHS/FEMA ERT – JIC PIO staffing.
2. JIC is activated and fully staffed.
3. VPIC is activated and fully staffed if directed
4. Monitor news media for storm information.
5. Prepare/distribute media advisory on response activities in the impacted areas.
6. Conduct live media briefings with local and national media.
7. Distribute information to elected officials as appropriate.
8. Contact DHS/FEMA Region III – coordinate hurricane response and recovery information with other states as needed.
9. Coordinate with Governor’s press office for tour of impacted area for Governor.

Emergency Relief Phase (Life-Saving Operations and the Restoration of Essential Services)

1. JIC is activated and fully staffed.
2. VPIC is activated and fully staffed if directed.
3. Monitor news media for storm response and recovery information.
4. Prepare/distribute media advisory on response activities in the impacted areas.
5. Contact DHS/FEMA Region III – coordinate hurricane response and recovery information with other states as needed.
6. Distribute information to elected officials as appropriate.

7. Begin preparations for transition to a Joint Field Office – equipment and staffing.
8. Continue live media briefings with local and national media as long as necessary.

Note: Although coastal localities and the State EOC will be using these hurricane-specific operations periods, others, to include inland host localities, will not. They do not have separate hurricane plans and will be using the standard operations periods. (Reference the State EOP.) However, the two checklists are not incompatible. If reference is made to the “hours before the arrival of tropical storm force winds,” local officials in inland localities can make it work within the context of their own checklists.

Attachments

- 1 – Joint Information Center
- 2 – Community Outreach Program

Annex E, Attachment 1
Joint Information Center

PURPOSE

- A. Protection of the public health and safety in the event of a catastrophic emergency such as a hurricane imposes upon state, local and federal government the responsibility to provide complete, accurate, timely, appropriate and understandable information to the public.
- B. An effective Emergency Public Information Program requires cooperation and advanced planning among potential emergency response organizations. Recognizing the unique and separate responsibilities and jurisdictions of the organizations involved in emergency response, the planning and actual response efforts must emphasize interagency cooperation and coordination.

GUIDANCE

- A. The overriding concept of the Joint Information Center (JIC) is that it recognizes that each of the individuals represented at the JIC may continue to represent his/her own agency, while at the same time receiving the benefits of a coordinated public information approach. This principle is embodied in and represented by the Senior Coordination Group, the roundtable of senior public information professionals present at the JIC.
- B. A second benefit of the JIC is that it can result in the pooling of assets so that each individual agency will have far greater resources available than if they were functioning alone.
- C. If the JIC concept is implemented effectively, the public will receive accurate, thorough and timely information with less risk of conflicting statements.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

- A. After a catastrophic hurricane, it is expected that all normal means of communications in the affected areas would either be demolished or largely incapacitated. Therefore, only limited and incomplete information is anticipated from the disaster area until communications can be restored.
- B. The effective utilization of this time period, however, is critical in setting up the large and complex public information mechanism that will be needed to respond to the emergency public information and news requirements for a disaster of this magnitude.

- C. While more than one news center may be established, there will be only one main coordination and release site at any given time during the post-disaster response period to assure accurate and timely dissemination of all information to the public, as well as to the media. To the maximum extent possible, federal, state and local information will be coordinated prior to its release.

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS

- A. The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) will open and begin staffing the JIC 48 hours before a hurricane is to make landfall. The JIC will usually be located in the Virginia Emergency Operations Center. Media Information and Public Inquiry/Rumor Control centers will be staffed and set up with phones and other appropriate equipment. Other state agency public information staff will be called in or placed on alert.
- B. Unless otherwise stated, the JIC will be staffed to operate around the clock with two 12-hour shifts.
- C. If any pre-deployment of state or federal officials to the potential hurricane landfall area occurs, a small PIO contingent will locate there to link Richmond JIC with near-site PIO staff.
- D. As soon as possible after hurricane landfall, a federal, state and local JIC will open near the disaster area. This JIC will likely be located within or adjacent to the Joint Field Office.
- E. It is state policy to encourage full participation in the JIC by federal, state, local, voluntary and private responding organizations. However, if this is not feasible, all organizations are encouraged to coordinate their information activities with the JIC.
- F. The primary organizational elements of the JIC will be centered around divisions responsible for:
 - 1. Information Gathering and Production, i.e., gathering, editing and producing information products for dissemination by the JIC in various forms suitable for use by print, broadcast, and other media.
 - 2. Information Dissemination, i.e., disseminating information to various media through various means, including briefings, news releases, interviews, appearances before groups, etc.
 - 3. Senior Coordination Group, i.e., a group comprised of the senior public affairs representatives from each JIC member agency. This group comes together from time to time to help guide the policies of the JIC, and to help coordinate significant JIC activities such as briefings.

4. Administrative and Logistical Support.
- G. Each person representing a JIC member organization will function in two capacities:
1. Represent his/her agency in carrying out the public affairs mission of that agency; and
 2. Provide public affairs services for the JIC in support of the various JIC missions.
- H. The primary functions of the on-scene JIC are to:
1. Provide response and recovery information to individuals, families, businesses and industry directly or indirectly affected by the disaster. Information will be provided through the news media and other means. Emergency information will be provided as required during the recovery phase, including use of an outreach program. Emergency information will primarily originate with state and local authorities.
 2. Coordinate state information prior to release, and ensuring it, in turn, is coordinated with information released by local and federal governments and voluntary organizations.
 3. Process information requests from local, regional, national and international media regarding the scientific evaluation of the event and the governmental response.
 4. Hold news conferences and briefings regularly to give the media access to the facts and to experts helping with recovery operations.
 5. Handle VIP briefings and tours.
 6. Provide basic facilities, as necessary, such as communications, office space and supplies, which would assist the news media in performing their role as disseminators of essential information to the public. Such facilities will be provided as long as the State Coordinating Officer determines them to be in the public interest.
 7. Provide a public inquiry/rumor control function to curb false information from wide circulation. Work with the media to halt rumors by disseminating the facts.

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Details on personnel, communications, equipment, supplies, etc. are included in the VDEM Public Information Standing Operating Procedures (SOP).

Annex E, Attachment 2
Community Outreach Program

This is a DHA/FEMA program designed to inform the disaster-affected community of the assistance available, where it will be provided, and when and how to apply for it. Outreach needs to reach the public in the disaster area well in advance of opening the Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs). Emphasis is placed on providing information to those individuals who are affected but cannot get to a DRC. The program is a measure of how well the disaster response is meeting the needs of the public and solving their problems. Outreach provides special attention to isolated areas and groups, such as the elderly, handicapped, minorities, and those with linguistic problems. Methods of reaching the public in the affected area are through use of mass media, toll-free “hot line”, town meetings, personal contact, contacting local officials and representatives of civic, service, or religious organizations, and by posting of notices and distribution of fliers. The fliers may be mailed, posted, or delivered to selected businesses, churches, post offices, and residences along secondary and rural roads. The fliers should be mailed, posted, or preferably hand delivered to the immediate area affected by the disaster. Fliers will be prepared jointly by the DHS/FEMA and VDEM PIOs.

Everyone connected with the disaster response and recovery effort should be aware of activities in the disaster area and be prepared to perform community outreach functions. Generally, however, two Community Outreach Teams will be established in the affected area. Each Team is composed of a federal representative and a state representative. The state representative will be nominated by the State Coordinating Officer. The information gathered by individuals involved with outreach activities assist the FCO and SCO in anticipating areas, which need their attention while also supplementing the public information effort.